

U.S.-India Civil Aviation Relationship

Today in Hyderabad we celebrate the new heights, literally and figuratively, of the global partnership between the United States and India. As we begin the second decade of the millennium, our two nations have unprecedented levels of cooperation in fields ranging from counterterrorism to climate change, education to women's empowerment, and science to security. Our civil aviation partnership is one of our greatest success stories, leveraging the best innovative efforts of our governments, people, and industries into safe skies, pioneering technology, and economic advancement for the people of both our countries. The U.S.-India civil aviation relationship stands at the forefront of our global partnership not only because of what we have achieved already, but because of the bold pace of our accomplishments and the great promise still to be fulfilled.

Since the signing of the United States and India Open Skies Agreement in 2005, our bilateral civil aviation cooperation has literally taken off. Direct flights between our two countries are now commonplace and are an engine of growth for the people-to-people ties that are the backbone of our relationship. The U.S.-India Aviation Cooperation Program launched in 2007 is now a vibrant public-private partnership which brings the best of U.S. technology, expertise and aviation best practices to partner with India on civil aviation development. When India launched its first international civil aviation exhibition and conference, India Aviation 2008, the United States stood side-by-side with India as the official partner country. This year, at India Aviation 2010, the U.S. Government and U.S. industry will continue to play a prominent role with the United States as the focus country.

One of my priorities as U.S. Ambassador to India is working with public and private sector partners to help catalyze the partnerships that will create economic opportunities and jobs in both our countries. In August, I had the pleasure of meeting with Director General of Civil Aviation Dr. Nasim Zaidi and awarding a grant of Rupees 24 million to the DGCA for technical assistance to help facilitate the expansion of safe and reliable helicopter services throughout India. The program is now fully under way with Bell Helicopter lending its expertise to help improve India's expanding helicopter sector.

Earlier this year, I also had the opportunity to welcome our newly forged U.S.-India Aviation Security Working Group where our increasingly close cooperation on mutual commercial and security interests moves forward and breaks new ground. The first Aviation Security meeting achieved a major breakthrough by signing two landmark aviation security agreements on the deployment of air marshals and technical airport visits. I am proud of the unprecedented level of cooperation between our two countries to ensure the safety of our skies for all of our citizens.

It is a privilege for me to lead the United States team in Hyderabad for India Aviation 2010 where the U.S. Government and U.S. industry will play a key role. India Aviation 2010 presents our two countries with another opportunity to deepen and strengthen our civil aviation cooperation. With India expected to emerge as the world's fastest growing aviation market over the next two decades, and multibillion dollar infrastructure investments planned to handle an estimated 580 million passengers in the

next 5 to 7 years, the opportunities for our two nations to work together are virtually unlimited. India Aviation 2010 provides the perfect platform to explore and launch these exciting opportunities. As the official focus country, and with the largest foreign private sector contingent, the United States pavilion features more than 35 U.S. companies -- not only some of the biggest names in civil aviation like Boeing, GE, Oshkosh, Honeywell, UTC, Raytheon, Hawker Beechcraft and Gulfstream, but also numerous competitive 'new-to-India' small and medium enterprises. These companies are exhibiting their aircraft, helicopters, airplane engines, airport products, personnel training, aviation safety standards, and technical knowhow. They are ready to do business in India and share the best of America with our Indian partners.

India Aviation 2010 also provides a forum for our governments and industry to come up with solutions to the challenges facing the Indian aviation sector. Together, we will find ways to move forward in the wake of the worldwide economic slowdown, create safer skies and airports, and develop environmentally and economically sustainable airport infrastructure. India has already made significant strides towards bringing in structural policy reforms to encourage foreign investment and public-private partnership projects, including allowing 100% foreign investment in airport infrastructure and the establishment of the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, the wife of world famous aviator Charles Lindbergh and herself an aviation pioneer said, "Flying is a very tangible freedom... beauty, adventure, discovery — the epitome of breaking into new worlds." India Aviation 2010 provides a glimpse into those new worlds where our two nations have unlimited opportunities to work together to push the boundaries of our aviation partnership. Our cooperation paves the way for technological advancement, economic opportunities, and safer skies for the citizens of both our nations.